

Tall Building Predictions for 2020

The combined brains of the CTBUH editorial and database staff boldly predict what might happen across the global skyscraper industry in 2020. Check out our monthly predictions based on our industry intelligence to see what trends and milestones will shape the industry in the year to come. See also our 2019 Tall Buildings Year in Review (page 42), which details all 200-meter-plus high-rises completed worldwide. An expanded version of this article can be found at [skyscrapercenter.com/predictions-2020](https://www.skyscrapercenter.com/predictions-2020).

January: “Serendipity Engineering in the Sky” Will Continue into the New Decade

As a high premium is placed on knowledge workers and fresh ideas, we can expect more completions like that of **Trinity**, an ambitious office tower outside Paris, which is targeted at Millennials. The project features many of the trappings many new corporate towers have deployed recently to draw more employees into chance encounters in communal spaces—“engineering serendipity” by turning “collisions” into ideas. This includes terraces and loggias, wellness centers, highly configurable interiors, and 3,500 square meters of landscaped urban space near the Grande Arche de la Défense.



Trinity Tower, Courbevoie, Cro&Co Architecture, Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield. © L. Zylberman

February: The United Kingdom Attempts “Brexit”—Once More, With Feeling

Much turmoil unfolded in the past year, when the “hard Brexit” deadline of 29 March 2019 for the UK to leave the European Union came and went, and a new administration took hold. The latest “Brexit Day” was set for 31 January 2020, so February would be the beginning of what promises to be extensive and tumultuous trade talks. Once again, the tall building industry, and the many pan-European commercial enterprises that commission and occupy those buildings, look set to spend another year asking “Leave or Remain?” Even so, some have already voted with their foundations: the formerly London-based **European Medicines Agency** has already relocated to a new high-rise in Amsterdam.

March: The Observation Deck Race Heats Up

The Edge, the observation deck at **30 Hudson Yards**, New York City, is scheduled to open on March 11, heating up both the local and the global observation-deck race. The dramatic, wedge-shaped outdoor structure will project some 24 meters from the side of the building, at 337 meters above grade. A substantial triangular glass floor will add to the drama, and, backers hope, the competitive “edge” of Hudson Yards against the rest of New York’s (and the globe’s) famous perches. There’s more to come, but a little later: **One Vanderbilt’s** observatory isn’t due to open until 2021.

April: Shenyang Paces Shenzhen’s Completions

The **Shengjing Finance Plaza** project in Shenyang, China, consists of 15 buildings, all but one of which are planned to be more than 200 meters in height. Three of these

buildings completed in 2018, but the remaining 12, two of which are mixed-use and 10 of which are residential-only, are on track to finish in 2020. Should this occur, Shenyang may be giving Shenzhen, recently the most prolific skyscraper city in the 200-meter-plus category (see Year in Review, page 42), a run for its money.

May: Central and South Asian Countries Join the Global Tall Parade

The aspirations of Central and South Asia to join the global ranks of skyline cities appear to be delivering in 2020. Case in point, the **Abu Dhabi Plaza** is a major mixed-use development located in Nur-Sultan (Astana), Kazakhstan. The project, expected to rise to 382 meters, will include a Sheraton hotel, and would become the tallest building in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. In Baku, Azerbaijan, the eccentrically-crowned, 276-meter **Baku Tower** looks set to overtake the equally sinuous SOCAR Tower as the country’s new tallest building. Similarly, Pakistan will welcome the mixed-use **Bahria Town ICON** in Karachi as its new tallest building, at 273 meters. This was a long time coming—construction began in 2008.

June: Big Year for Mega-Districts

This may be a big year for purpose-built mega-districts within or just outside major cities. The massive **King Abdullah Financial District** in Riyadh began construction in 2010 and has moved forward in fits and starts, with just 10 of its more than 40 planned buildings completing by the end of 2019. But for most of the project, it appears 2020 will be key. The centerpiece, **PIF (formerly Capital Markets Authority) Tower** is to finish off at 385 meters, making it Saudi Arabia’s tallest building.



Thamrin Nine Tower 1, Jakarta. © KPF

Meanwhile, **NEVA Towers**, consisting of one 297-meter mixed-use and one 345-meter residential building, will finish in Moscow this year, rounding out the 60-hectare Moscow-City development.

July: Three Supertalls for Jakarta

In a city that has a burgeoning construction scene, but has never had a building of 300 meters or higher, Jakarta stands ready to support three new supertalls in 2020. Two are in the same complex, **Indonesia-1**, and a third tower, **Thamrin Nine Tower 1**, is set to reach 334 meters, becoming the city's and Indonesia's height champion.

August: Sky Infinity Pools Become the New Luxe de Rigeur

It used to be that being able to swim to the edge of an infinity pool to take in sweeping views from a tall building was limited to just a few famous exceptional buildings, such as the **Marina Bay Sands** in Singapore. But in 2020, the trend seems to be taking on new momentum. Set to open this year at **Australia 108**, Melbourne, an infinity pool that allows residents to swim up to double-height floor-to-ceiling windows at its midpoint. At the **Royal Atlantis**, Dubai, not only will there be a rooftop pool, but numerous private pools, set behind glass balustrades on balconies, will offer sky views out and aquatic views in. Not to be outdone,

the **Palm Tower** in Dubai will feature a 360-degree infinity pool.

September: Give Way for Gateways

Skyline-watchers in 2020 can expect some extraordinary projects which, by emphasizing the space bridged by their forms as much as their ability to scrape the sky, are designed to open symbolic doors to their cities, and, backers reckon, economic and cultural opportunities as well. Chicago's **Vista Tower**, Melbourne's **Collins Arch**, and Dubai's **Jumeirah Gate**, and operate at different scales and in quite different contexts, but all are expected to frame new perspectives on their cities for citizens and visitors alike.

October: The CTBUH International Conference Takes Place in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur

The CTBUH International Conference, "**Humanizing High Density: People, Nature & the Urban Realm**" takes place from 19-23 October 2020 in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, focuses on the essential question of how high density can support equitable and healthy living, working and social well-being. Our modest prediction is that it will be a smashing success—but only if we get great participation from our network. Consider this your call to action!

November: Older Tall Buildings Extend Their Height, and Their Lifespans

It's not the first year to see tall buildings in their august years receive skyward extensions as part of an overhaul, but developers are increasingly asking, "why tear down when you can spruce up?" Note New York's **425 Park Avenue**, where Foster + Partners is telescoping a 118-meter 1957 building into a 262-meter contemporary office building in 2020. The 1962 former headquarters of Pirelli, **Torre Bonnet** in Milan, will also emerge from its chrysalis as the slightly taller **Corso Como Place**. And, although completion in 2020 is unlikely, construction watchers will enjoy the legendary Richard Seifert's cylindrical 1968 **Space House** in London gain two stories as part of its makeover.

December: More Than 200 Supertalls in Existence by End of 2020

Although we overestimated in our prediction that there would be more than 200 supertalls (buildings of 300 meters and higher) in the world by the end of 2019 (there were 170), we're confident that by the end of 2020, we will have more than 200. As recently as 2015, there were only 102 such buildings worldwide, which is remarkable growth by any standard.



Vista Tower, Chicago. © Studio Gang